

Concentration

Every one is able to gain success in his profession or occupation only through concentration and one-pointedness in effort. Even the pettiest of tasks needs for its fulfilment the quality of concentration. The toughest problem yields before unswerving endeavour. Man is endowed with unlimited powers. Not a single man is without them! But the road is missed, since he is unaware of this truth. To gain the awareness of this power, he must join the company of the holy; he must strive in Sadhana; and he must practise Japam and Dhyanam. Of what avail is it even if you have each item of provision in plenty, when you do not know the method of cooking them into palatable food? Similarly, man has in himself all the provisions needed for his upkeep and progress, but he discards them lightly and leaves them unused, because he is ignorant of the process of benefiting by them. Man must seek to see and understand the Universal Sakthi, the One without a Second, which is the Basis of all the multifarious manifestations of Name and Form in the world around him. The mind flies at a tangent all the time. Dhyanam is the process by which it is trained to acquire concentration.

Concentration is essential for all. It is the foundation of all successful endeavour. It is needed not only for Dhyana, but even for worldly affairs and ordinary living. Whatever be the task one is engaged in, if one does it with concentration, one will develop both self-confidence and self-respect; for they are the result of the attitude of one's own mind. The mind may lean on either the bad or the good. Concentrated attention must be employed to keep the mind attached only to good promptings. Success or failure in the good task depends upon onepointedness. Dhyana gives concentration and success in all tasks.

For every item of work, one-pointedness is very important. It is not correct to say that the qualities and attainments needed for temporal progress and spiritual progress are different from each other. The spiritual is only the purification of the temporal. Success or failure in both depends on concentration or Ekagratha. The capacity to concentrate is a very useful qualification.

The main difference between men and the animals is the difference in their power of concentration. All success in any line of work is the result of this. Everybody knows something about concentration. We see its results every day. High achievements in art, music, etc., are the results of concentration. An animal has very little power of concentration. Those who have trained animals find much difficulty in the fact that the animal is constantly forgetting what is told him. He cannot concentrate his mind long upon anything at a time. Herein is the difference between man and the animals — man has the greater power of concentration. The difference in their power of concentration also constitutes the

difference between man and man. Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. This is the only difference.

All knowledge that we have, either of the external or internal world, is obtained through only one method — by the concentration of the mind. No knowledge can be had of any science unless we can concentrate our minds upon the subject.

The astronomer concentrates his mind through the telescope... and so on. If you want to study your own mind, it will be the same process. You will have to concentrate your mind and turn it back upon itself. The difference in this world between mind and mind is simply the fact of concentration. One, more concentrated than the other, gets more knowledge.

In the lives of all great men, past and present, we find this tremendous power of concentration. Those are men of genius, you say. The science of Yoga tells us that we are all geniuses if we try hard to be. Some will come into this life better fitted and will do it quicker perhaps. We can all do the same. The same power is in everyone. The subject of the present lecture is how to concentrate the mind in order to study the mind itself. Yogis have laid down certain rules and this night I am going to give you a sketch of some of these rules.

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Those who practice concentration evolve quickly. They can do any work with scientific accuracy and great efficiency. What others do in six hours can be done, by one who has concentration, within half an hour. What others read in six hours can be read, by one who does concentration, within half an hour. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought, and clarifies the ideas.

Concentration helps a man in his material progress also. He will have a very good out-turn of work in his office or business house. He who practises concentration will possess very clear mental vision. What was cloudy and hazy before becomes clear and definite now. What was difficult before becomes easy now. And what was complex, bewildering, and confusing before comes easily within the mental grasp. You can achieve anything through concentration.

Nothing is impossible to a man who practises regular concentration. It helps the scientists and professors to do great research work. It helps the doctor and the lawyer to do much work and earn more money. It develops willpower and memory; it sharpens and brightens the intellect. Concentration bestows serenity or calmness of mind, inner spiritual strength, patience, great capacity to turn out tremendous work, alacrity, acumen, agility, beautiful complexion, sweet voice, brilliant eyes, powerful voice and speech, power to influence others and attract people,

cheerfulness, joy, bliss of soul, supreme peace. It removes restlessness, agitation of mind, laziness. It makes you fearless and unattached. It helps you to attain God-realization.

The more is the mind fixed on God the more is the strength you will acquire.

More concentration means more energy. Concentration opens the inner chambers of love or the realm of eternity. Concentration is a source of spiritual strength.

Be slow and steady in concentration. By practice of concentration, you will become superhuman.

For the person engaged in research in a laboratory, for one walking along a road, or for a scholar reading a book, or an individual writing a letter, or driving a car, the concentration of all their attention on the articles before them and the activity they are engaged in is very important. He understands the nature and peculiarities of the object he is handling. The more intense your concentration, the more successful will be your activity. When the mental abilities are focused on one effort, knowledge can be acquired quicker and from a wider field. And, that is the only way by which knowledge can be earned.

Concentration will enable one, whoever he is, whatever the activity he is engaged in, to finish it much better than otherwise. Whether in material assignments, or in ordinary day-to-day work or in spiritual Sadhana, concentration of mental energies is a must, if success is to be achieved. It is the key that can open the treasure-chest of Jnana. This is the most important aspect of Rajayoga. It can even be said that it is the only important aspect of that Yoga. Millions of unwelcome, unwanted, unnecessary and even harmful thoughts enter our minds and confound their activities. These have to be kept out; the mind has to be guarded and controlled and kept under our rigorous supervision. Rajayoga is the one refuge for persons endeavouring to win this victory.

Concentration is the ROOT of all the higher abilities in man.

Concentration is the key to success in all endeavors, spiritual or worldly. The scientist, Isaac Newton, for example, said he came by his discoveries as a result of occupying his mind exclusively with the subject over a long period—hence concentration. So with the artist, the musician, the millionaire ... all succeed by concentration. Likewise, lost in his contemplation, is the yogi, or the mystic. Nothing very great can be accomplished without a concentration of mind.

You must have heard these names: Sir Isaac Newton, Edison, Albert Einstein, Roger Federer and Bill Gates. All these great personalities have been outstanding in their respective fields. Can you tell me, what is common in between them? Their ability to stay focused for long periods of time. No wonder, their accomplishments are groundbreaking and that is why they have earned a place in the list of great achievers. Concentration is the key to achieve that peak performance, necessary to stay ahead in today's competitive world. Newton could hold a problem in his mind for hours and days and weeks until it surrendered to him its secret.

Attention span is the amount of time that a person can **concentrate** on a task without becoming **distracted**. Most educators and psychologists agree that the ability to focus one's attention on a task is crucial for the achievement of one's goals. There is a relationship between the attention scores and IQ scores. A subject who had a large attention span also had high IQ scores and vice versa.

To do any work, you need concentration but to relax and expand you don't need concentration. Relaxation is the mother of concentration and so if you relax well, you are able to concentrate better.

Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun's rays do not burn until brought to a focus.

By always thinking unto them. ... **I keep the subject constantly before me and wait till the first dawns open little by little into the full light.**

His peculiar gift was the power of holding continuously in his mind a purely mental problem until he had seen it through.

Concentration is the essence of all knowledge, nothing can be done without it. Ninety per cent of thought force is wasted by the ordinary human being, and therefore he is constantly committing blunders; the trained man or mind never makes a mistake. When the mind is concentrated and turned backward on itself, all within us will be our servants, not our masters. The Greeks applied their concentration to the external world, and the result was perfection in art, literature, etc. The Hindu concentrated on the internal world, upon the unseen realms in the Self, and developed the science of Yoga. Yoga is controlling the senses, will and mind. Concentration is restraining the mind into smaller and smaller limits.

Moreover, whatever you may want to do in life, one thing is absolutely indispensable and at the basis of everything, the capacity of concentrating the attention. If you are able to gather together the rays of attention and consciousness on one point and can maintain this concentration with a persistent will, nothing can resist it — whatever it may be, from the most material physical development to the highest spiritual one. But this discipline must be followed in a constant and, it may be said, imperturbable way; not that you should always be concentrated on the same thing — that's not what I mean, I mean learning to concentrate. And materially, for studies, sports, all physical or mental development, it is absolutely indispensable. And the value of an individual is proportionate to the value of his attention. And from the spiritual point of view it is still more important. There is no spiritual obstacle which can resist a penetrating power of concentration. For instance, the discovery of the psychic being, union with the inner Divine, opening to the higher spheres, all can be obtained by an intense and obstinate power of concentration — but one must learn how to do it.

There is nothing in the human or even in the superhuman field, to which the power of concentration is not the key. You can be the best athlete, you can be the best student, you can be an artistic, literary or scientific genius, you can be the greatest saint with that faculty. And everyone has in himself a tiny little beginning of it — it is given to everybody, but people do not cultivate it.

We have but one method of acquiring knowledge. From the lowest man to the highest Yogi, all have to use the same method; and that method is what is called concentration. The chemist who works in his laboratory concentrates all the powers of his mind, brings them into one focus, and throws them on the elements; and the elements stand analysed, and thus his knowledge comes. The astronomer has also concentrated the powers of his mind and brought them into one focus; and he throws them on to objects through his telescope; and stars and systems roll forward and give up their secrets to him. So it is in every case — with the professor in his chair, the student with his book — with every man who is working to know. You are hearing me, and if my words interest you, your mind will become concentrated on them; and then suppose a clock strikes, you will not hear it, on account of this concentration; and the more you are able to concentrate your mind, the better you will understand me; and the more I concentrate my love and powers, the better I shall be able to give expression to what I want to convey to you. The more this power of concentration, the more knowledge is acquired, because this is the one and only method of acquiring knowledge. Even the lowest shoeblack, if he gives more concentration, will black shoes better; the cook with concentration will cook a meal all the better. In making money, or in worshipping God, or in doing anything, the stronger the power of concentration, the better will that thing be done. This is the one call, the one knock, which opens the gates of nature, and lets out floods of light. This, the power of concentration, is the only key to the treasure-house of knowledge. The system of Raja-Yoga deals almost exclusively with this. In the present state of our body we are so much distracted, and the mind is frittering away its energies upon a hundred

sorts of things. As soon as I try to calm my thoughts and concentrate my mind upon any one object of knowledge, thousands of undesired impulses rush into the brain, thousands of thoughts rush into the mind and disturb it. How to check it and bring the mind under control is the whole subject of study in Raja-Yoga.

- *Take up one idea, make that one idea your life; think of it, dream of it, live on that idea.* Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of you body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced. Others are mere talking machines.
- Concentration means intensifying the *power of assimilation*.
- Here is the difference between man and the animals - *man has the greater power of concentration*. The difference in their power of concentration also constitutes the difference between man and man. Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. This is the only difference.
- What is the result of constant practice of higher concentration? All old tendencies of restlessness and dullness will be destroyed.
- *All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind*; the infinite library of the universe is in your own mind. The external world is simply the suggestion, the occasion, which sets you to study your own mind, but the object of your study is always your own mind. The falling of an apple gave the suggestion to Newton, and he studied his own mind; he re-arranged all the previous links of thought in his mind and discovered a new link among them, which we call the LAW OF GRAVITATION. It was not in the apple nor in anything in the center of the earth.
- How has all the knowledge in the world been gained but by the concentration of the powers of the mind? *The world is ready to give up its secrets* if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point; that is the secret.
- In making money, or in worshipping God, or in doing anything, *the stronger the power of concentration, the better will that thing be done*, This is the one call, the one knock, which opens the gates of nature, and lets out floods of light. This, the power of concentration, is the only key to the treasure-house of knowledge.
- Concentration will bring *perfect repose to mind and body* every time it is practiced.
- Concentration of the powers of the mind is our only *instrument to help us see God*. If you know one soul (your own), you know all souls, past, present, and to come. The will concentrates the mind, certain things excite and control this will, such as reason, love,

devotion, breathing. the concentrated mind is a lamp that shows us every corner of the soul.

Three benefits of concentration meditation have been mentioned in Buddhist teachings;

1. A favorable rebirth
2. Happiness in the present life
3. Mental purity suitable for the development of wisdom

Tranquillity, or concentration of mind, according to Sankhepavannana (Commentary to Abhidhammattha-sangaha), bestows a threefold blessing: favourable rebirth, present happy life, and purity of mind which is the condition of insight. Concentration (samādhi) is the indispensable foundation and precondition of insight by purifying the mind from the 5 mental defilements or hindrances (nīvarana), whilst insight (vipassanā) produces the 4 supra mundane stages of holiness and deliverance of mind.

Bhavava is of two kinds. Samatha bhavana (development of tranquility) and Vipassana-bhavana (development of insight). Samatha bhavana leads to concentration (samadhi), and Vipassana-bhavana leads to wisdom (panna). Concentration of mind bestows a threefold blessing: favourable rebirth, a present happy life, and purity of mind which is the condition to insight or wisdom. The benefits of developing concentration are described by the Blessed One:

(1) Various kinds of supernormal power, (2) Knowledge of the Divine Ear Element, (3) Knowledge of Penetration of Minds of others, (4) Knowledge of Recollection of Past Life and (5) Knowledge of the Passing Away and Reappearance of Beings.

The development of absorption concentration (jhana) provides the benefits of an improved form of existence in the Brahma World—Fine-material world (rupa loka) and Immaterial World (arupa loka).

D.: My mind is very unsteady. What should I do?

Ramana Maharshi.: Fix your attention on any single thing and try to hold on to it. All will be right.

D.: I find concentration difficult.

Ramana Maharshi: Go on practising. Your concentration will be as easy as breathing. That will be the crown of your achievements.

D.: Are not abstinence and pure food helpful?

Ramana Maharshi: Yes, all that is good. (Then Maharshi concentrates and silently gazes at vacancy, and thus sets an example to the questioner).

Nisargadatta: **Be conscious of yourself, watch your mind, give it your full attention. Don't look for quick results; there may be none within your noticing. Unknown to you, your psyche will undergo a change, there will be more clarity in your thinking, charity in your feeling, purity in your behaviour.** You need not aim at these -- you will witness the change all the same. For, what you are now is the result of inattention and what you become will be the fruit of attention.

Q: Why should mere attention make all the difference?

Nisargadatta: So far your life was dark and restless (tamas and rajas). **Attention, alertness, awareness, clarity, liveliness, vitality, are all manifestations of integrity, oneness with your true nature (sattva). It is in the nature of sattva to reconcile and neutralise tamas and rajas and rebuild the personality in accordance with the true nature of the self.** Sattva is the faithful servant of the self; ever attentive and obedient.

Q: And I shall come to it through mere attention?

Nisargadatta: Do not undervalue attention. It means interest and also love. To know, to do, to discover, or to create you must give your heart to it -- which means attention. All the blessings flow from it.

Concentration is attention. The fixed attitude of attention, that is concentration. If you pay attention to what you do, your mind will be concentrated. Many sit down for meditation and wonder why they do not succeed. How can you suppose that half an hour of meditation and twenty- three and a half hours of scattering of thought throughout the day and night, will enable you to concentrate during the half hour? You have undone during the day and night what you did in the morning, as Penelope unravelled the web she wove. To become a Yogi, you must be attentive all the time. You must practice concentration every hour of your active life. Now you scatter your thoughts for many hours, and you wonder that you do not succeed. The wonder would be if you did. You must pay attention every day to everything you do. That is, no doubt, hard to do, and you may make it easier in the first stages by choosing out of

your day's work a portion only, and doing that portion with perfect, unflagging attention. Do not let your mind wander from the thing before you. It does not matter what the thing is. It may be the adding up of a column of figures, or the reading of a book. Anything will do. It is the attitude of the mind that is important and not the object before it. This is the only way of learning concentration. Fix your mind rigidly on the work before you for the time being, and when you have done with it, drop it. Practise steadily in this way for a few months, and you will be surprised to find how easy it becomes to concentrate the mind.

Moreover, whatever you may want to do in life, one thing is absolutely indispensable and at the basis of *everything*, the capacity of concentrating the attention. If you are able to gather together the rays of attention and consciousness on one point and can maintain this concentration with a persistent will, *nothing* can resist it—whatever it may be, from the most material physical development to the highest spiritual one. But this discipline must be followed in a constant and, it may be said, imperturbable way; not that you should always be concentrated on the same thing—that's not what I mean, I mean learning to concentrate.

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And from the spiritual point of view it is still more important. There is *no* spiritual obstacle which can resist a penetrating power of concentration. For instance, the discovery of the psychic being, union with the inner Divine, opening to the higher spheres, *all* can be obtained by an intense and obstinate power of concentration—but one must learn how to do it.

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This is part of meditation in a Zen monastery -- whatsoever you do, do it with awareness. When you walk, walk fully alert; when you move your head, be fully alert. Whatsoever you

do, follow it with alertness; don't miss it, don't think of anything else. Be there in it as a light and everything is revealed. Every act, every nook and corner of it is lighted; nothing is in darkness. When you eat, eat with awareness. This is all one has to do in a Zen monastery -- twenty-four hours of alertness.

Meditation cannot be a fragmented thing, it should be a continuous effort. Every moment one has to be alert, aware and meditative. But the mind has played a trick: you meditate in the morning and then you put it aside; or you pray in the temple and then forget it.

Then you come back to the world, completely unmeditative, unconscious, as if walking in a hypnotic sleep. This fragmented effort won't do much. How can you meditate for one hour when you have been nonmeditative for twenty-three hours of the day? It is impossible.

Suddenly to become meditative for one hour is not possible. You can simply deceive yourself.

Consciousness is a continuum; it is like a river, flowing constantly. If you are meditative the whole day, every moment of it... and only when you are meditative the whole day the flowering will come to you. Nothing will come before.

This Zen anecdote looks absurd but it is very meaningful. The master, the monk, used to call himself -- this is what meditation means, calling yourself -- he used to call his own name. He would say, "Are you there?" And he himself would reply, "Yes sir, I am here."

This is an effort, a peak effort, to be alert. You can use this, it will be very helpful.

Suddenly, walking on the street, you call yourself, "Teertha, are you there?" Suddenly thinking stops, and you have to answer, "Yes sir, I am here." It brings you to a focus. When thinking stops you are meditative, alert.

When you walk, when you move your hand, when you smile, do it all with awareness.

Know perfectly well that it is you who is doing that action. Be alert. Not a single moment or movement should pass in an unconscious state. Not a single action should happen in your body without your awareness.

4. Let us first take one-pointedness of mind. It is indispensable for any work. Even in worldly affairs, one needs concentration. It is not that the qualities needed for worldly success are different from those needed for spiritual progress. Spirituality means nothing but purification of worldly life. Business, scientific research, politics, diplomacy—in fact, take any activity, concentration of mind is the key to success. It is said of Napoleon that after chalking out the strategy and deploying the troops on the battlefield, he would lose himself in solving mathematical problems. Amidst heavy shelling and dying soldiers, he would sit absorbed in those problems. I am not suggesting that Napoleon's concentration was of the highest degree; one can give examples of even higher concentration. I just want to draw

your attention to the level of his concentration. The same thing is said about Caliph Omar. Even when the battle was in progress, he would steady his mind, kneel down and start praying on the battlefield at the appointed hour. He would then be totally unaware of what was happening around. It was on account of such devotion and one-pointedness of mind of the early Mahomedans that Islam spread far and wide.

5. The other day, I heard a story about a Muslim ascetic. An arrow had pierced and stuck into his body. The pain was unbearable. But any attempt to pull out the arrow resulted only in greater pain. Anesthetic agents like chloroform were not available in those days. Everybody was perplexed. Some persons who knew the ascetic well said, "Forget about the arrow for the time being. We shall pull it out when he starts his prayers." In the evening, at the appointed hour, the ascetic started his prayers. In a moment, his mind was so concentrated that he did not know when the arrow was pulled out. What a wonderful degree of the concentration of mind!
6. Thus, success is hard to come by, in temporal as well as in spiritual pursuits, without one-pointedness of mind. If you could make your mind one-pointed, you will never be short of strength. Even if you are an old man of sixty, you will have the enthusiasm and strength of a young man. The mind should, in fact, go on getting stronger as one gets older. Look at a fruit. In the beginning it is raw, then it ripens, then decays; but the seed within gets harder and harder. The shell deteriorates and falls off; but that is not the essential part of the fruit. Its essential part is the seed. Similarly, memory should grow stronger and intellect should become sharper and more radiant as one ages. But this does not happen. People complain of failing memory and attribute the cause to their old age. But knowledge, wisdom, memory are like one's seed, one's essential part. Even as the body grows older and becomes infirm, the soul should become stronger. Onepointedness of mind is necessary for this purpose.

There is one common thing that we notice in all walks of life. When two people engage in a similar activity they end up with different levels of success in their endeavours. We see this quite

often among students. When two students spend nearly the same amount of time (say 5 hours a day) one scores above 90 and the other 60 marks. Similarly, the effectiveness of two people discharging the same activity vastly varies at times in an office or a factory. One housewife spends 3 hours to finish cooking while the other takes 5 hours and end up with less satisfaction even after spending longer time in the kitchen. Concentration – Anti-dote to low performance.

Concentration — A Key to Success

The root cause of many failures in life is lack of concentration. Attention is like a searchlight; when its beam is spread over a vast area, its power to focus on a particular object becomes weak, but focused on one thing at a time, it becomes powerful. Great men are men of concentration. They put their whole mind on one thing at a time.



One should know the scientific method of concentration (taught in the [Yogoda Satsanga Lessons](#)) by which he may disengage his attention from objects of distraction and focus it upon one thing at a time. By the power of concentration, man can use the untold power of mind to accomplish that which he desires, and he can guard all doors through which failure may enter.



We should approach our nearest problem or duty with concentrated energy and execute it to perfection. This should be our philosophy of life.



Most people do everything half-heartedly. They use only about one-tenth of their attention. That is why they haven't the power to succeed....[Do] everything with the power of attention. The full force of that power can be attained through meditation. When you use that focusing power of God, you can place it on anything and be a success.

By Pranayama impurities of the body are thrown out; by Dharana the impurities of the mind; by Pratyahara impurities of attachment; and by Samadhi is taken off everything that hides the lordship of the Soul."

The AmritanAda Upanishad says:

यथा पर्वतधातूनां दहयन्ते धमनान्मलाः ।

तथेन्द्रियकृता दोषा दहयन्ते प्राणधारणात् ॥ ७ ॥ Just as the impurities in the mineral ores are removed through the process of smelting, so too the defects (pApam) owing to the action of the senses (and the mind) are burnt through the process of prANAYama.

प्राणायामैर्दहेद्दोषान्धारणाभिश्च किल्बिषम् ।

प्रत्याहारेण संसर्गान् ध्यानेनानीश्वरान्गुणान् ॥ ८ ॥

Through prANAYama defects are to be burnt. Through dhAraNa, all the impurities, pApams. By pratyAhAra all attachments and by dhyAna all the AsurIguNas (are to be burnt).